DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
RELEASE [illegible] 7/2/85
DECLASS. DATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Washington, D.C. 20520

665 REQUEST F-15 Congressional

July 17, 1981

Dear Mr. Brown:

I am responding to your letter of May 27 to the President concerning the proposed sale of AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia and the risks that a compromise of AWACS technology would pose to U.S. security.

The United States is taking a number of steps to insure that AWACS and other technology sold to the Saudis will not be compromised. We are working out a security of information agreement to protect the sensitive equipment we are proposing to sell to Saudi Arabia, which will include provisions for joint periodic security inspections of Saudi facilities. In addition, U.S. military versions of some sensitive subsystems wi[illegible] not be included in the Saudi AWACS aircraft.

Although AWACS technology is still sensitive, it is in fact four years older than when a sale of AWACS was proposed for Iran. Detailed AWACS technology has been released to NATO. Israel and Japan have received the E2C which contains some comparable technology. Finally, it should be noted that the Soviets are already flying a system which gives them an airborne surveillance capability.

The suggestion that AWACS be maintained under sole U.S. control and deployed at a U.S. base in the area is, as a practical matter, not feasible. Saudi Arabia believes that as a sovereign nation it has both the right and the duty to provide for its own defenses. The Saudis, like the Israelis and others, have repeatedly indicated that they want to be able to defend themselves to the greatest extent possible without being dependent on foreign help.

Recognizing that they lacked adequate early warning capabilities to assure the protection of their oil fields and installations in the crisis days following the outbreak of the Iran/Iraq war, the Saudis asked for U.S. assistance through the temporary deployment of U.S. AWACS. However, the clear long term Saudi objective has been to acquire over time the sophisticated military equipment they need to defend themselves to the best of thei[illegible]ility. The Saudi rulers

The Honorable
Clarence J. Brown,
House of Representatives.

and Saudi military leaders clearly prefer that approach to the alternative of a permanent presence of U.S. AWACS and U.S. military personnel on their territory. They believe the latter would be inconsistent with their sovereignty.

I appreciate your concern and interest in this matter, and hope this information will be useful in your continuing examination of the proposal to sell AWACS and other defense equipment to the Saudis.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Fairbanks
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Drafted: NEA/ARP:MRArietti/BEhrnman
7/15/81:x23121

Clearances: NEA/ARP:RHPelletreau
H:EMartin
ACDA:EFeingold
PM:DOchmanek
S/P:DRoss

NEA:JWTwinam
T:RAhearne